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REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL AT ITS SIXTEENTH SESSION

1. Under the Chairmanship of Mr. Charles A. Liburd (Guyana) the Programme Committee at its first to thirteenth meetings, held between 20 and 27 May, considered agenda items 6 (a), 6 (b) and 7.

2. At the first meeting of the Committee, held on 20 May 1991, Mr. J.N.O. Onyango (Kenya) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation. The Committee also approved the organization of its work, as proposed in document UNEP/GC.16/PC/L.1.

3. In considering the agenda items on its work programme, the Committee had before it the following documentation: the suggested timetable for the Programme Committee (UNEP/GC.16/PC/L.1); chapter III of the Annual Report of the Executive Director for 1989 (UNEP/GC.16/2); chapter III of the Annual Report of the Executive Director for 1990 (UNEP/GC.16/3); part II of the 1990 Report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to the Governing Council at its sixteenth session (UNEP/GC.16/12); part II of the 1989 Report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to the Governing Council at the sixteenth session (UNEP/GC.16/13 and Corr.1 (English and French only)); proposed programme budget of UNEP for the biennium 1992-1993 (UNEP/GC.16/15 and Corr.1); set of proposed additional activities for 1992-1993 (UNEP/GC.16/15/Add.1); implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification 1989-1990 (UNEP/GC.16/16 and Corr.1); external evaluation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (UNEP/GC.16/16/Add.1); report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on possible adverse effects of sea-level rise on islands and coastal areas, particularly low-lying coastal areas (UNEP/GC.16/18); international conventions and protocols in the field of the environment (UNEP/GC.16/19); updated list of selected environmentally harmful chemical substances, processes and phenomena of global significance (UNEP/GC.16/20 and Corr.1); programme matters requiring policy guidance from the Council (UNEP/GC.16/21 and Corr.1 (English only)); strengthening the main units within the Office of the Environment Programme by the establishment of programme activity centres (PACs) (UNEP/GC.16/21/Add.1 and Corr.1); modifications to the UNEP medium-term plan by the General Assembly (UNEP/GC.16/21/Add.2 and Corrs.1 (English only) and 2); climate change, biological diversity, sustainable agriculture (UNEP/GC.16/21/Add.3);

environmentally sound management of chemicals, in particular those that are banned or severely restricted, in international trade (UNEP/GC.16/21/Add.4); strategies for the protection and development of the oceans and coastal areas (UNEP/GC.16/21/Add.5); register of international treaties and other agreements in the field of the environment (UNEP/GC.16/Inf.4).

4. The Assistant Executive Director, Office of the Environment Programme, in introducing item 7, indicated those areas that required policy guidance. He referred to the Annual Reports of the Executive Director for 1989 and 1990 for a review of past activities, and pointed out the relationship between the proposed programme budget and the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme (SWMTEP) for the period 1990-1995. He also drew attention to the fact that UNEP's proposed programme of action took full account of recent General Assembly resolutions on environmental issues and placed greater emphasis on regional co-operation and inter-agency co-ordination. The proposed programme budget, he pointed out, focused on the seven areas of concentration defined by the Governing Council in its decision 15/1. The Assistant Executive Director referred to the activities contained in the proposed programme and indicated the interrelationship among the different sub-programmes. He asked the members of the committee for their views and guidance.

A. Subprogramme 1: Atmosphere

Programme element 1.1: Atmospheric pollution and climate

5. Several representatives asked for clarification of UNEP's intentions regarding support for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a framework convention on climate change. Responding to this, a representative of the secretariat confirmed that UNEP gave high priority to the INC, provided support for the INC Secretariat and related technical seminars, and intended to provide information for such countries to clarify aspects of the issues involved.

6. One representative expressed the view that the future programme dealing with atmospheric pollution and climate contained few new activities. Speaking in reply, a representative of the secretariat stated that the intention was to build on activities of the current biennium; however, there were plans to expand national climate impact networking and international co-ordination of such programmes through UNEP and to co-operate in new monitoring programmes initiated by the World Meteorological Organization.

7. Several representatives asked what UNEP was doing to ensure co-ordination of climate activities with other bodies. One representative drew attention to the recommendations of the Second World Climate Conference pertaining to UNEP and expressed the hope that UNEP would respond positively to them. In reply, a member of the secretariat stated that recommendations of the Second World Climate Conference, endorsed by the eleventh Congress of WMO, called for a co-ordination mechanism for the World Climate Programme (WCP), focusing on the establishment of a Committee of Chairmen of the four components of the World Climate Programme, including the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) for the former World Climate Impact Studies Programme, now renamed the World Climate Impact Assessment and Response Strategies Programme (WCIRP). Other co-ordination measures, he added, included regular meetings of senior representatives and annual meetings of executive heads of organizations

participating in the World Climate Programme. There would also be an intergovernmental meeting to discuss appropriate means for co-ordination and the provision of adequate resources for the WCP, which would be convened by WMO, with support from UNEP and others, before the end of 1992.

8. Some representatives said that UNEP should ensure that activities being implemented under the new Global Environment Facility (GEF) were not duplicated by similar activities carried out under the WCIRP, but should be mutually reinforced. Another representative asked that plans to estimate the costs of responding to climate change be co-ordinated with those of IPCC, UNCED and OECD, which were undertaking similar activities. Yet another representative said that country-specific studies should be undertaken in conjunction with UNDP.

9. Several representatives asked what activities UNEP planned to undertake in support of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) with regard to climate and atmospheric pollution matters. In reply, a representative of the secretariat stated that UNEP co-operated closely with the Preparatory Committee for UNCED and would publish a significant number of relevant studies in conjunction with and in support of UNCED.

10. Some representatives asked that special attention be given to assessing the impacts of climate change in semi-arid regions and coastal zones.

11. The observer for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of Unesco noted the importance of ocean processes in influencing the rate of climate change and drew attention to IOC's co-operation with UNEP in developing climate impact assessments and response strategies in coastal regions.

12. One representative expressed his country's concern over the lack of information on urban air quality in tropical cities. A representative of the secretariat said that UNEP, in co-operation with WHO, addressed this issue, particularly in tropical regions.

13. One representative referred to the high cost of implementing the provisions of the Montreal Protocol in developing countries and indicated that such countries would need additional financial assistance in this regard.

14. The observer for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) stressed the importance of the atmospheric monitoring programmes established by WMO and supported by UNEP. He urged that UNEP provide additional support for monitoring programmes, especially the Global Atmosphere Watch, which was a major component of the proposed Global Climate Observing System, recommended by the Second World Climate Conference, and noted the co-operative efforts of UNEP, WMO and other relevant organizations in drawing up a plan to combat the impacts of oil fires in Kuwait.

B. Subprogramme 2: Water

15. A number of representatives expressed their support and appreciation for UNEP's programme on freshwater. One representative asked that UNEP focus more on pollution prevention and control, as well as on management of freshwater resources, and asked UNEP to put greater emphasis on preventive mechanisms with regard to pollution. The same representative pointed to the need to examine water reuse.

16. One representative asked UNEP for more allocations to developing countries in order to strengthen their institutional capabilities.

17. Two representatives stated that UNEP should put more emphasis on water management in large urban settlements. One representative and the observer from the International Lake Environment Committee pointed to the proposed creation of a UNEP Global Environmental Technology Centre in Japan, which would deal, inter alia, with freshwater lake/river basins, and enhance rather than duplicate existing activities.

18. Several delegates sought clarification on UNEP's involvement in the preparations for the International Conference on Water and the Environment to be held in Dublin. In reply, the representative of the secretariat said that UNEP's support entailed the preparation of two keynote position papers on the main theme of the Conference and of the document for the working group on action plans for the environmentally sound management of freshwater resources. UNEP, he further stated, was also providing financial support for participants from developing countries and other support for the Secretariat of the Conference.

19. One delegate sought general clarification of the status of preparation of action plans for shared freshwater bodies and of the 1995 target of one plan per region. In reply, the representative of the secretariat said that UNEP was providing financial support to the implementation of some of the Programmes under the Zambezi Action Plan. The Lake Chad Action Plan, he pointed out, would be submitted to Heads of State for approval later in 1991. Further, he stated, preliminary negotiations had been held with the Governments of Colombia and Venezuela for the preparation of an action plan on the Orinoco Basin, as well as preliminary discussions with the Governments of the riparian countries of the Nile Basin concerning the preparation of an action plan. An assessment of fourteen shared water bodies had been completed in the Asian region, he stated.

20. One representative stressed the importance of UNEP's participation in the preparation of the Action Plan for the rescue of the Aral Sea and in the assessment of the state of Lake Baikal.

21. One representative asked for clarification concerning the costs for each action plan. In reply, the representative of the secretariat stated that this varied according to the size and environmental status of each Basin but that approximately US$100,000 to $200,000 were needed for the preparation of national action plans and approximately US$500,000 for the preparation of international action plans. Additional funds are required for their implementation.

C. Subprogramme 3: Terrestrial ecosystems

1. Programme element 3.1: Soils, agricultural lands and agrochemicals

22. Several representatives noted the urgency of the problem of soil degradation and expressed the view that it could be best addressed within the framework of the national soils policies developed by UNEP under the plan of action for the implementation of the World Soils Policy. One representative expressed concern about widespread soil salinization and waterlogging.

Another delegation considered that land degradation problems should be tackled at the national and local levels. One representative stressed the importance of UNEP's assistance to developing countries in the formulation of national soils policies, which should be integrated into overall national development plans.

23. One representative noted with satisfaction UNEP's Global Assessment of Soil Degradation (GLASOD) project and its outputs, and the project's contribution to the preparation of the World Atlas of Desertification and the Soil and Terrain Digital Database (SOTER) methodology for the compilation of soils and terrain databases. This and other similar projects, he stated, were capable of providing essential ingredients for the formulation of national soils policies.

24. One representative requested more details on soil mapping and its cost and stated that his Government gave high priority to the formulation and implementation of national soils policies. One representative requested information on UNEP's inputs into UNCED's work in that area. The representative of the UNEP secretariat replied that UNEP was preparing one of the five papers in this area for UNCED, and was actively co-operating in the preparatory work for UNCED.

25. On the issue of sustainable agriculture, one representative expressed the view that document UNEP/GC.16/21/Add.3 gave ample information on the results of Governing Council decision 15/24 in the field of sustainable agriculture. However, the outcome of the recent FAO/Netherlands Conference on Agriculture and the Environment held from 15-20 April in Den Bosch Netherlands, could not, for understandable reasons, be included in the document. The Conference produced a declaration and agenda for action focussing on low-external-input sustainable agriculture (LEISA). The representative further evaluated the new policy lines that had been developed during the Conference.

26. The observer for FAO, responding to the question made by one delegation, as to the way in which the UNCED preparatory process was dealing with the question of land resources, stated that FAO was very actively contributing to UNCED's Working Party on land and Agriculture, which was producing three main documents for the Preparatory Committee: (i) integrated land management with emphasis on marginal lands and main agroecosystems, (ii) sustainable agriculture which was based essentially on the outcome of the FAO/Netherlands Conference on Agriculture and the Environment and (iii) control of land degradation and desertification.

2. Programme element 3.2: Arid lands and desertification

27. In considering this programme element, the Committee also took up discussion of agenda item 6 (b): "Co-ordination questions: reports of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination".

28. A number of representatives expressed their general support for the recommendations contained in the report of the Executive Director on the External Evaluation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (PACD) (GC.16/16/Add.1). One representative, however, asked for an explanation of how the recommendations would be followed up. Another representative was of the opinion that the report could have suggested more specific recommendations on the revision of the PACD, including making use of a special working group

for this purpose. One representative, while agreeing with the conclusion of the report that the PACD was a continuous process, and hence difficult to target, expressed the view that milestones could, however, be identified. Another representative voiced the opinion that the co-ordinating role of UNEP had not received much attention in the evaluation report.

29. Many representatives recommended that co-ordination of anti-desertification activities should be improved not only at the international and regional levels, but also at national and even local levels. Responding to some of the queries raised on this subject, the representative of the secretariat informed the Committee that UNEP already complied with that request by working closely with the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), the African Deserts and Arid Lands Committee of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the Regional Network of Research and Training Centres in Desertification Control in Asia and the Pacific (DESCONAP) and the Regional Environment Network Asia/Pacific (RENN-A/P). UNEP, he added, had also initiated action to establish a regional network on desertification-related research and training in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

30. Many representatives requested that the findings of the external evaluation of the PACD be submitted to the UNCED Preparatory Committee as soon as possible. The representative of the secretariat replied that a composite report on "Status of Desertification and Implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification" was being prepared, as requested under General Assembly resolution 44/172, and would be submitted to UNCED. He also provided information on the current status of preparation of the document.

31. Some representatives expressed the view that combating desertification should be a priority activity of UNEP. One representative suggested that UNEP could focus on marginal areas. Another representative was of the opinion that it would be better to focus on a few countries. One representative requested the UNEP secretariat to look into the possibility of paying more attention to China. One representative also stressed the importance of including in the work of the programme the problem of desertification the Aral Sea area.

32. While supporting the recommendation to retain the Consultative Group for Desertification Control (DESCON), a number of representatives suggested that its mandate should be changed to concentrate on information exchange, co-ordination and advice. Some representatives, however, said that, although they could support a change and a reduction in the mandate of DESCON, they wondered whether DESCON could not be abolished completely.

33. In reply to a question from one representative about the use of funds allocated for DESCON in the programme if it were to be abolished, the representative of the secretariat said that such funds would be available for other activities. In reply to a question from another representative on the effect of a changed DESCON mandate on UNEP expenditures, the representative of the secretariat said that there would be no changes in the costs of convening DESCON sessions.

34. It was proposed by a number of representatives that the DESCON-8 session be of a special character, devoted mainly to contributing to UNCED. Other representatives, however, expressed the view that the activities under the programme should however be kept flexible pending the outcome of UNCED.

35. Many representatives, supported the need to refine the concept of desertification, as recommended in the Executive Director's external evaluation of the PACD. In response to the above suggestion the representative of the secretariat referred the Committee to the definition adopted by the February 1990 ad hoc consultative meeting on the ongoing global assessment which described desertification as land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, resulting from adverse human impact.

36. In this regard, a number of representatives urged the donor community to pledge funds to finance anti-desertification programmes, while some others expressed the view that further research into financing mechanisms was necessary. A number of representatives noted, however, that the funding depended very much on the degree of efficiency and effectiveness with which funds were used. One representative emphasized that financial assistance should take into account the fact that desertification control required long-term efforts, while another representative suggested that technical assistance should be incorporated into plans of action to combat desertification.

37. In reply to a question on the procedure for obtaining assistance in formulating national plans of action to combat desertification, the representative of the secretariat pointed out that UNEP acted on requests from Governments.

38. Many representatives stressed the importance of socio-economic factors and recommended that PACD should be integrated into overall development plans. Many representatives pointed out that the participation of the local population was essential, in both the design and implementation phases of projects.

39. Several representatives expressed the opinion that the experiences of regional co-operation organizations should be fully utilized. The observer for the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference said that the contributions of regional organizations to the Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification (IAWGD) could be much more effective if their observer status could be changed into full membership. In reply, the representative of the secretariat replied that the observer status of regional organizations such as CILSS, IGADD or SADCC to IAWGD was in accordance with a Governing Council resolution from the thirteenth session. Full membership would indeed enhance the work of IAWGD, he said, and the Governing Council might consider recommending the full membership of these organizations in IAWGD.

40. A number of representatives, stressed the importance of national and local programmes within a national co-ordinated framework. In that connection, the representative of the secretariat referred to the initiative of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) in organizing meetings covering the harmonization of strategic frameworks for environment and natural-resource management at the country level.

41. A number of representatives stressed the importance of training and research activities. The representative of the secretariat said that DESCON-7 and the first meeting of a panel of senior consultants on the revised PACD had recommended looking into the institutional set-up of the centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research for this purpose.

42. Many representatives urged UNEP to encourage the utilization of comparable methodologies in analysing, measuring, assessing and monitoring desertification effects. One representative asked if there were proposed activities for analysis of soil degradation which occurred as a result of intensive agricultural practices, especially when subsidies were used. To this the representative of the secretariat replied that the issue was not addressed in the proposed activities. However, the recent conference on agriculture and environment in the Netherlands had addressed the issue of new strategies in that regard and the Global Assessment of Soil Degradation (GLASOD) database contained useful information.

43. As concerns technology some representatives suggested that ample attention be given to the transfer of technology.

44. One representative commended the work of UNEP related to the preparation of the World Atlas on Thematic Indicators of Desertification, while another representative expressed appreciation for the fact that the Global Assessment of Soil Degradation database had been used for the atlas.

45. One representative stressed that the impact of climate change on regions affected by desertification should not be forgotten. The representative of the secretariat replied that attention was being given to the monitoring of drought-prone areas through the GRID programme, with emphasis on Africa.

46. One representative said that the French initiative of the "Sahara and Sahel Observatory" [OSS] had not been mentioned in document UNEP/GC.16/16. The representative of the secretariat regretted the omission and confirmed that UNEP co-operated closely in the joint project to develop a methodology to assess ecological changes in the West African Sahel.

47. The observer for the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office reported on joint action with UNEP in relation to the preparations for UNCED, and briefed the Council on other major activities. The links between UNEP and UNSO, he said, had strengthened in recent years, both at the institutional level and in practical activities such as monitoring and assessment.

3. Programme element 3.3: Forests and other ecosystems

48. Several representatives highlighted the importance of the forests and other ecosystems programme to UNEP's overall work, which according to one representative illustrated UNEP's appropriate catalytic role.

49. While one representative supported the continued efforts within the Tropical Forestry Action Plan and the co-operative project to develop methodologies to assess the real value of forests, several others emphasized the economic dimension of forests, in addition to the ecological dimension.

One representative expressed the view that more attention needed to be given to the management of agricultural activities to reduce deforestation. Another representative stressed the need for sustainable forest management, particularly regarding meeting the needs for fuelwood.

50. One representative mentioned the need for information on the role of deforestation in climate change. One representative called for continuation within the programme of work on the protection of genetic resources of tropical forests and biosphere reserves.

51. A number of representatives raised the question of an international convention, agreement, or guiding principles on forests. Some of these representatives recalled that a definitive direction on these issues still had to be decided within the UNCED process. One representative, pointing to the guidelines for sustainable forest management developed by the International Tropical Timber Organization, emphasized the need to avoid duplication in the development of guidelines. Several representatives stressed the global dimension of the conservation and management of forests, stating that conventions on climate change and biological diversity could only partially address the issue and that a separate instrument could address forests in terms of their broad, multiple uses. Such an instrument, stated these representatives, should be flexible and based on individual country targets. One representative urged that preparatory work on a legal instrument should proceed rapidly.

52. Some other representatives expressed concern about the development of an international legal instrument on forests. One representative, while voicing support for the development of a convention on forests, stated that such an instrument should not be forced on countries but should be introduced when the time was right. The observer for FAO indicated that, in the same way that FAO had assisted in the preparation of legal and technical elements for the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO was ready, as instructed by its Council in November 1990, to start the preparations for a legal instrument on forests, duly harmonized with those on climate change and on biological diversity, once Governments had given the green light on how to proceed.

53. Several representatives noted the role of the UNCED process in determining whether work should be initiated on such a convention. One representative drew attention to the in-depth studies of forest issues requested by the UNCED Preparatory Committee.

4. Programme element 3.4: Biological diversity

54. Many representatives expressed support for UNEP's activities under the programme element in general and for the preparation of country studies on biological diversity in particular. Several representatives noted that it was important to ensure the effective and full participation of developing countries in the negotiation of the planned legal instrument on biological diversity. One representative, however, expressed concern about supporting developing countries' participation from the Environment Fund and recommended the establishment of a trust fund for this purpose. The same representative, while commending the ongoing effort for the preparation of country studies and the existing level of work, recommended that country studies on biological diversity be supported on a bilateral basis.

55. The representative of the UNEP secretariat explained that, in the absence of external funding, it had been necessary to include a substantial allocation for support to the convention. Efforts were being made, however, to secure additional funding and, indeed, such funding had been provided by several countries in the past meetings of the Group. He further stated that the proposed country studies would also contribute to the implementation of the biodiversity projects to be funded through the Global Environment Facility.

56. One representative recommended the establishment of a multidisciplinary steering group for the application of the guidelines for the preparation of country studies, with the aim of ensuring consistency and the comparability of individual studies. Two representatives indicated that their Governments were prepared to provide financial support for the preparation of country studies, based on the guidelines. One representative stated that his Government had initiated the preparation of a country study based on the guidelines.

57. Several representatives stated that support for participation of the developing countries in the negotiating process should continue to be a high priority. One representative expressed the view that the process of negotiating the convention on biological diversity would be strengthened by inviting other international organizations to participate directly.

58. Many representatives were in favour of changing the name of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Biological Diversity into the "Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee", to reflect the actual mandate and goal of the group. One representative stressed that the convention on biological diversity should place strong emphasis on marine biodiversity and UNEP should intensify its support for this area. The same representative went on to say that development of national conservation strategies should not be restricted to biodiversity issues.

59. There was general agreement that 1992, the year of UNCED, should be the target date for signing the convention. Some representatives however, pointed out that expediency in putting together the convention should not sacrifice its content. One representative stressed the importance of the participation and support of relevant United Nations bodies and agencies and other international organizations in the preparation of the convention.

60. One representative asked for continuous support and monitoring of existing conventions related to biodiversity, e.g. the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Another representative strongly supported UNEP's role in providing the Secretariats for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

61. Several representatives supported UNEP's involvement in the preparation of the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) for the 1990s and the Global Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. One representative stated that both strategies were world-wide in scope and that co-ordination between the two was necessary. Another representative supported UNEP's promotion of the WCS and the Global Biological Diversity Conservation Strategy.

62. One representative proposed that the programme element be upgraded into a sub-programme. He also proposed that UNEP should play a greater role in selecting projects related to biological diversity to be financed by the Global Environment Facility and should increase its support to training in this area.

5. Programme element 3.5: Microbial resources and related biotechnologies

63. Several representatives emphasized the importance of the subprogramme. One representative stressed, in particular, the importance of the MIRCENs network.

64. Some representatives emphasized the importance of biosafety issues, while one expressed concern about the possible duplication of work in this area and requested full co-ordination and co-operation with FAO, UNIDO, Unesco, UNCED, and OECD.

D. Subprogramme 4: Oceans

65. All representatives that spoke on the subject expressed their appreciation and full support for the activities of the Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre (OCA/PAC) and for the emphasis on the Regional Seas Programme. One representative encouraged the expansion of the Regional Seas Action Plans, and advocated the use of large marine ecosystems as a regional management tool.

66. One representative suggested that it would be suitable to carry out an in-depth appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses in the Regional Seas Programmes, in order to learn from the success of specific components. A member of the UNEP secretariat pointed out that such an evaluation was being carried out.

67. Some representatives requested more funding for the South-East Pacific Regional Seas Programme. One representative requested a Regional Seas Programme for the South-West Atlantic.

68. A number of representatives supported the focus on integrated coastal zone management, and proposed that the national capacities of developing countries in coastal zone management be developed through appropriate training.

69. Several representatives addressing the destruction of fragile ecosystems such as mangroves and coral reefs, encouraged UNEP's planned efforts in this area. Several representatives expressed their strong interest in UNEP's work on the Marine Mammals Action Plan. One representative requested more information on new programmes concerning marine mammals.

70. Several representatives suggested that the impressive results already achieved at the Halifax intergovernmental meeting of experts on land-based sources of pollution in identifying strategies to control such sources of pollution of the marine environment should be complemented at a further meeting. Such a meeting could prepare in detail a strategy and a framework

for an action plan to control land-based sources of marine pollution, as well as other land-based activities which degrade the marine environment, and the meeting's results should be submitted to the fourth meeting of the UNCED Preparatory Committee.

71. The observer for WMO expressed appreciation for the numerous co-operative initiatives between WMO and UNEP, most recently in the wake of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict. Some representatives encouraged co-operation between IOC and UNEP programmes on the monitoring of long-term effects of climate change.

72. The observer for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of Unesco drew the attention of the Council to the numerous joint programmes between the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and UNEP, especially concerning measures to control and abate pollution, global ocean monitoring, inputs into Earthwatch and assessment of the impact of climate change, as well as the good co-operation within the United Nations system in this field.

73. One representative encouraged co-ordination and information exchange between regional programmes within the United Nations system. The representative also requested that UNEP study the fluctuations in the growth of the OCA/PAC budget.

74. The observer for the IMO informed the Committee of the recent adoption of the International Convention on Oil Pollution, preparation, response and co-operation in 1990. He pointed out that one of the objective of the Convention was to enhance the capacity of countries to prepare for and respond to oil pollution emergency through international co-operation and mutual assistance and encouraged States to accept the Convention. He expressed the hope that increased emphasis could be placed on such matters within the Regional Seas Programme, which IMO fully supported.

75. Two representatives suggested that the activities planned for 1992-1993 should retain some flexibility to adapt to the outcome of UNCED.

E. Subprogramme 5: Lithosphere

76. Some representatives queried the usefulness of the Lithosphere subprogramme and its impacts. Expressing support for this view, another representative suggested that most activities under the subprogramme could be carried out by other United Nations agencies such as WMO, Unesco, ECA, UNIDO, the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and Unesco and that the studies on biogeochemical cycles could be transferred to other UNEP subprogrammes. He questioned the need to continue with the activities, particularly at a time of great competition for limited resources.

77. One representative commended UNEP for supporting research activities dealing with the biogeochemical cycles of sulphur, phosphorus and carbon and the environmental problems they presented. Referring to sulphur, he stated that air pollution and acidification of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems were important issues. He stressed that enrichment of surface and groundwater resources with phosphates from the application of agrochemicals, detergents and from sewage posed the threat of polluting a scarce resource, affecting many developing countries.

78. Speaking in reply, the representative of the secretariat pointed out that the activities under the subprogramme were important in three respects: first, to limit the amount of waste resulting from mining activities which often leached into rivers; second, to address specific questions pertaining to groundwater and its replenishment; and finally, because storage of hazardous waste in the lithosphere (mostly in abandoned mines) affected the hydrological cycle.

F. Subprogramme 6: Human settlements and the environment

1. Programme Element 6.1: Environmental aspects of human settlements planning and management

79. Several representatives stressed the importance of the environmental aspects of rapid urban growth in developing countries, and suggested that special emphasis should be placed on the problems of mega-cities.

80. One representative, while supporting the activities under the human settlements and the environment programme element, said that rural settlements should also be taken into account. The needs of small island countries and their coastal areas, he stated, should also be reflected in the allocation of resources.

81. Several representatives specifically supported the activity for establishment of policy options for four coastal settlements in the context of sea-level rise. The representatives emphasized that this activity should be co-ordinated with the ongoing work of the International Negotiating Committee for a convention on climate and related activities in the Oceans and Coastal Areas programmes of UNEP.

82. The observer for the World Health Organization described the ongoing collaboration with UNEP in the area of environmental health aspects of human settlements, and stated that the excellent guidelines prepared under a joint project could now be applied in selected countries and regions.

83. In considering this programme element, the Committee also took up discussion of agenda item 6 (a) "Co-ordination Questions: Co-operation between UNEP and UNCHS."

84. All representatives who spoke on the subject expressed their satisfaction with the collaboration between UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in the four areas of co-operation described in the joint report of the Executive Directors of UNEP and Habitat (UNEP/GC.16/11) and suggested that these should be expanded to include other areas. Underlining the close connections between human settlements and the environment, the representatives stated that the rapid urban growth in most developing countries was, in particular, a cause for concern. Special emphasis under new activities should be given to the sustainable cities programme and the control of pollution in human settlements. One representative underlined the importance of the studies on the release of methane from land fills.

85. Some representatives emphasized that, in light of sea-level rise, activities should be expanded to focus on coastal settlements, the improvement of the living and working conditions of the low-income population and the provision of an adequate supply of drinking water.

86. One representative emphasized the need to co-ordinate UNCHS and UNEP inputs into the UNCED process, so that the environmental aspects of human settlements could be reflected in the outcome of UNCED. One representative suggested that, taking note of the interesting recommendations of the UNCHS on habitat and sustainable development, this issue should be high on the agenda.

87. The observer for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements welcomed the increased collaboration with UNEP and singled out some of the main joint activities, especially the sustainable cities programme and the assessment of environmental conditions in human settlements. The representative stated that the interlinkage between human settlements and the environment had been the main theme at the thirteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements.

2. Programme element 6.2: Community preparedness for natural and man-made environmental disasters

88. Several representatives, speaking in connection with the proposed United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance under this programme element, said they preferred to reserve their discussions on the matter for the plenary session of the Council. Some representatives requested UNEP to provide more detailed information on related activities within the United Nations system, including the reports prepared by the consultants, as background for the plenary discussion on the subject.

89. Replying to the request, the representative of the secretariat stated that the reports of the consultants were available for study within UNEP and, as regards further information, the summary report on responses of Governments and agencies concerning the proposed Centre would be made available.

90. One representative strongly urged that the Centre be established as soon as possible in view of the long period since the idea had first been proposed in 1988 and the elaborate preparations that had already been undertaken. He also stated that, since that time, a number of major environmental emergencies had occurred and, had a Centre been in operation, these emergencies would have been handled with the minimum of environmental damage and loss of life. Another representative expressed support for the proposed centre.

91. Some representatives questioned the placing of the initiative for the Centre under programme element 6.2, in view of the many other possibilities, such as under the Industry and Environment Office and its Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL) programme, or under Earthwatch. Several representatives expressed the view that the proposed activities of the Centre would be more in line with the concept of networking between existing initiatives, rather than creation of a full-fledged Centre.

92. One representative suggested that what was needed was the strengthening of the United Nations' capacity to respond to emergencies. UNEP's role in this respect would be to assess an environmental emergency in both the short-term and long-term period through the provision of expertise. The representative of the secretariat, speaking in reply, confirmed that the idea had not been to establish a centre, but rather an expert service mechanism, along the lines suggested by the representative.

93. The observer for IMO speaking on behalf of IAEA, WHO, ILO, FAO, UNIDO and WMO, drew attention to the fact that the agencies, at the most recent inter-agency consultation in February 1991, had expressed the view that with the information available they could not support the establishment of a centre for co-ordination response to environmental emergencies. They believed that more work in modalities of operation of such a centre was required and more emphasis should be given to increasing active co-operation among participating agencies and enhancing their capabilities. There was, he said, genuine concern among the agencies, in particular those who had arrangements for co-ordinating a response to environmental emergencies, that the creation of a new arrangement might add a new layer of bureaucracy between those needing emergency assistance and those most able to provide it. It was suggested that, in view of the importance of the matter and the potential for duplication and confusion, a more cautious approach should be adopted.

G. Subprogramme 7: Human health and welfare

1. Programme element 7.1: Hazards of pollution

94. Several representatives stressed the importance of the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS), and one representative declared that the work on chemical safety could count on its continued support. One representative suggested that IPCS should be strengthened to deal with issues such as harmonization of labelling, good laboratory practices, risk analysis and risk reduction and assistance to developing countries in toxic chemical management. He praised the work of IPCS in connection with a possible intergovernmental mechanism for risk assessment and risk management of chemicals and urged UNEP, in collaboration with ILO and WHO, to convene a meeting of government experts to develop proposals for such a mechanism. Another representative supported the activities of IRPTC.

95. One representative referred to the dynamic developments in the field of management of chemicals in international trade, pointing to UNEP's pioneering role in enabling developing countries to make informed decisions on future importation of chemicals. He commended the work on the Amended London Guidelines and the prior informed consent procedure (PIC) for banned and severely restricted chemicals and noted with satisfaction the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on the Implementation of the Amended London Guidelines. He suggested that the Governing Council should follow the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group, in particular concerning the continuation of the work of the Group and the strengthening of the legal basis of the Amended Guidelines through the development of a convention. The representative commended UNEP's co-operation with other agencies, in particular FAO, which also operated a similar PIC procedure for pesticides.

96. One representative, while expressing broad support for the implementation of the amended London Guidelines, stated that further work on a convention would be premature and the emphasis should be placed on implementation of the guidelines before any further work could be undertaken.

97. Another representative expressed broad support for all activities described under subprogramme 7, noting that they reflected a favourable balance between ecology and human health. The representative also supported the link between IPCS and IRPTC, as well as with the amended London Guidelines. The same representative further sought clarification of the proposed new activities (numbers 2, 3, 5) under the programme element.

98. In reply, the representative of the secretariat explained that the proposed guidelines for environmental standard setting (new activity 2) were intended to implement recommendations of an earlier UNEP/WHO study on the subject. The increase in noise pollution in urban centres of many developing countries had made necessary an evaluated health risk assessment document (new activity 3). With regard to the health effects of urban air pollution (new activity 5), increased air pollution in urban centres of several developing countries had resulted in significant health risks. An epidemiological study and the development of control strategies could be undertaken, in co-operation with the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

99. One representative, while expressing support for the activities under the subprogramme, in particular IPCS and management of hazardous wastes and disease vector control, asked what justification there had been for the doubling in 1992-1993 of the funds allocated to IPCS. In reply, the representative of the secretariat explained that increased support for IPCS was necessitated by its expanding role in preparing risk evaluation documents on an increasing number of chemicals, in particular, those that were subject to PIC procedures, in training manpower to manage chemicals and dealing with chemical emergencies.

100. The observer for the World Health Organization noted with satisfaction a number of collaborative activities it had with UNEP and in particular to IPCS, which provided the main focus of collaboration. He welcomed UNEP's proposed new activities in the areas of noise pollution, urban air pollution and environmental standard setting.

2. Programme element 7.2: Environmental aspects of human health

101. One representative informed the Committee that, despite major efforts to control cholera in the West Pacific Region, the disease was becoming endemic and that already 160,000 people were at risk. The same representative also stated that, as a result, an international effort was needed to control the situation. Another representative supported the proposed activities on disease vector control.

102. The observer for the World Health Organization (WHO) informed the Committee about the work of the WHO Commission on Health and the Environment which was supported by panels on food and agriculture, energy, industrialization and urbanization, insofar as this related to health. The report of the Commission would provide an input on environment and health into UNCED.

H. Subprogramme 8: Energy, industry and transportation

1. Programme element 8.1: Energy and environment

103. Many representatives stressed the importance of the energy subprogramme, in view of the vital role of energy utilization in all aspects of development and the adverse environmental effects associated with present energy production and use patterns. They considered atmospheric pollution and the energy sectors' contribution to the greenhouse effect to be a significant problem.

104. Several representatives considered the new focus on energy efficiency and conservation to be very appropriate and they underlined the need to promote clean, new and renewable sources of energy such as hydropower, solar power and wind power.

105. One representative especially praised the activity covering support for developing countries to strengthen their capacity to integrate environmental concerns into national energy policy, planning and development. The representative also stressed that the national studies should examine the possible application of renewable energy sources in integrated rural development schemes.

106. Several representatives noted that collaboration was envisaged with a number of United Nations bodies and agencies and other organizations, but considered that the links to the World Bank in particular and to its Energy Sector Management and Assistance Programme (ESMAP) should be strengthened. The possibility of allocating additional funds for national activities from the Global Environment Facility should be examined carefully, they said. With respect to the GEF, one representative expressed his Government's concern that the use of the per capita criteria would limit some developing countries access to those resources.

107. Some representatives expressed their concern at the activity to provide support for the adoption of legal measures on climate change, and emphasized that UNEP should avoid duplication with the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations on a convention on climate change. The representative of the secretariat explained that the aim was in no way to interfere with the ongoing negotiating process, but to make the developed Greenhouse Gas Scenario System available to Governments and the IPCC as a tool for analysing abatement strategies.

108. One representative considered that the activities related to efficient technologies and energy conservation should not imply direct involvement in technology development activities, but should focus on information gathering and dissemination.

109. Several representatives raised the issue of technology transfer in relation to efficient energy technologies and considered it was an area where increased efforts should be made, especially in providing information on the relevant technologies to developing countries.

110. The observers for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the EC Commission also emphasized the importance of the activities under the energy and environment programme element and of the collaboration between their organizations and UNEP.

111. The observer for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) informed the Committee about the outcome of the Senior Expert Symposium on Electricity and the Environment convened in Helsinki 13 to 17 May 1991, which had been organized as a major inter-agency collaborative effort involving, among others, IAEA and UNEP. The collaboration would continue in several areas, initially in the enhancement of the energy environment database.

112. The observer for WHO spoke of the collaboration with UNEP on the energy, environment and health database, which was a priority under the WHO energy programme, and went on to list the priority areas identified by the WHO Technical Panel on Energy and Health.

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113. The observer for UNIDO spoke about the priority given to energy and environment issues in UNIDO and the new action programme in this area, which would be presented to the Industrial Development Board of UNIDO later in 1991. The representative expressed the need for collaboration between UNIDO and UNEP in the implementation of that new programme.

2. Programme element 8.2: Industry and environment

114. Many representatives highlighted the importance of the industry and environment programme element, as it reflected the growing importance of cross-sectoral issues that UNEP should address. Several of these representatives highlighted the role of industry partners and the need for co-operation between the various actors concerned, in particular NGO's. Several other representatives recommended that developing countries should be informed in advance of the potential environmental impact of transferred technologies. Some representatives underlined the link between energy and industry.

115. Many representatives expressed their full appreciation for the work of the UNEP Industry and Environment Office (IEO). A number of them supported IEO's becoming a Programme Activity Centre and said the Office should be given more substantial resources. The observers from ILO, the World Tourism Organization (WTO), UNIDO and the Commission of the European Communities, expressed satisfaction with their ongoing co-operation with IEO and wished to see such co-operation increased.

116. Several representatives and the observer for the EC Commission referred to the importance of dissemination of information and data, particularly in the field of low- and non-waste technologies, as a means to transfer technologies. A number of representatives stressed the importance of the information on cleaner production, and of the International Cleaner Production Information Clearing-house (ICPIC). A number of representatives expressed concern about the proposed UNEP Global Environment Technology Centre in Japan, suggesting that regional or national collaborating centres should be established to create a network co-ordinated by IEO. The Centre in Japan, they stated, could be welcomed as such a regional collaborating centre. Several countries expressed their desire to see the detailed terms of reference before any decision could be taken on the Centre. One delegation informed the Committee that the Centre in Japan would focus on pollution problems in megacities, specifically in developing countries. It was pointed out that the secretariat had prepared a note which described, inter alia, activities of the centre.

117. A number of representatives considered that a global convention on industrial accidents was not necessary, and that a regional approach would be more appropriate, as was currently being undertaken by the ECE. Several representatives and the observer for the EC Commission commended the Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL) programme. Some representatives and the observer for ILO recommended that greater emphasis should be put on preventive aspects, and that IEO should take a leading role in co-ordinating United Nations activities in this area. One country described the development of the APELL programme in his country and expressed a desire to continue co-operation with IEO on the subject.

3. Programme element 8.3: Transportation

118. A number of delegations and the observer from the EC Commission welcomed the increased activities of the transportation programme element along the lines proposed in the programme budget document.

4. Programme element 8.4: Tourism

119. Several representatives and the observer from the EC Commission supported the development of the tourism programme. One other representative, however, expressed reservations about this new activity. The observer for the World Tourism Organization (WTO) expressed satisfaction in seeing this new programme element and expressed a wish to continue the co-operation with UNEP in that field.

120. Some representatives mentioned the workshop entitled "Towards sustainable coastal tourism" (Mombasa 21-23 April 1991) as a good example of a national activity that could be undertaken in this context.

5. Programme element 8.5: Working environment

121. Some representatives expressed the view that priority should not be given to activities under the working environment programme element, as these could be better handled by other organizations. One representative said he would wish these activities to also involve employers' organizations. The observer for ILO, however, welcomed the inclusion of the working environment as a distinct programme element and expressed a desire to continue developing joint activities with UNEP in this area.

I. Subprogramme 9: Peace, security and the environment

122. Several representatives strongly supported the subprogramme activities and, in view of the emergence of new global concerns on environmental security, welcomed the new initiatives proposed. The developments on disarmament agreements were very encouraging, they stated, but it was essential for UNEP to continue to assess the situation and bring out recommendations for new mechanisms and institutional arrangements to help solve environmental conflicts and respond to the need for international environmental security. One representative suggested that the activity should be strengthened to cover such areas as nuclear tests and destruction of chemical weapons and that the whole concept of environmental security should be developed to put more emphasis on eradication of poverty.

123. Some representatives considered that UNEP should have a specific role in the areas of peace and security, but the proposed activities were not clear enough and were too costly. One representative proposed that new activities in the area should be distributed among relevant other subprogrammes.

124. A number of representatives expressed strong reservations about the proposed new activities, especially the activity to examine mechanisms to resolve environmental conflicts. They considered that this issue was being addressed by Working Group III of the Preparatory Committee for UNCED, and UNEP should not initiate any new activity in that area before the matter had been dealt with in that forum.

125. Several representatives recommended that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/235, this subprogramme should be deleted. The funds so released, stated one representative, could be reallocated.

126. One representative appealed to the Committee not to delete the subprogramme, since it dealt with the very survival of the biosphere as the life-support system of humanity. Recent events in Kuwait, he stated, attested to the need for such a subprogramme as part of UNEP's overall responsibilities.

J. Subprogramme 10: Environmental assessment

1. Programme element 10.1: Earthwatch co-ordination

127. All representatives that spoke on the subject and the observers for WHO, WMO, Unesco, FAO and UNSO supported the proposed strengthening of Earthwatch. One representative stressed the importance of the enhanced co-ordinating role of Earthwatch.

2. Programme element 10.2: INFOTERRA

128. Several representatives encouraged the strengthening of INFOTERRA to allow it to enhance the institutional capabilities of developing countries for storing and retrieving environmental information and to improve INFOTERRA's telecommunications links with network partners. One of the representatives, however, suggested that that might be achieved by moving Earthwatch activities to Geneva. One representative also expressed the desire for the strengthening of INFOTERRA's on-line access to databases and of its publications programme.

3. Programme element 10.3: International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC)

129. Several representatives commended the work of IRPTC, in particular its role in the implementation of the amended London Guidelines.

130. Some representatives underlined the importance of the work of IRPTC for developing countries as a global centre for the exchange of information on chemicals, thereby assisting these countries, through early warning and policy advice, in improving the rational management of chemicals.

131. One representative commended IRPTC as a well-run Earthwatch operation, stating that IRPTC was becoming an increasingly important global centre for the collection, storage and dissemination of data on chemicals. The representative referred to the important role of IRPTC in the FAO/UNEP joint programme on prior informed consent (PIC) and underlined the importance of the training and technical assistance given to developing countries, thereby improving institutional capabilities in the management of chemicals.

132. Concerning the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on the Implementation of the Amended London Guidelines, some representatives pledged broad support for its recommendations as presented in UNEP/GC.16/21/Add.4.

133. One representative drew particular attention to the need for further development of model national legislation for the implementation of the amended London Guidelines, harmonization of activities and the principle of prior informed consent (PIC), and for technical support for developing countries for the implementation of the Guidelines. The representative confirmed her continued support for the development of National Registers of Potentially Toxic Chemicals and for the development of a convention as the most appropriate means of strengthening the amended London Guidelines.

134. Some representatives proposed that IPCS develop proposals for an intergovernmental mechanism for risk assessment and risk management of chemicals in the context of the work of the Preparatory Committee for UNCED. One representative suggested that the Executive Director, in consultation with ILO, WHO, FAO and OECD, convene a government expert meeting to review such proposals.

135. One representative assigned low priority to the idea of developing a convention on the management of hazardous wastes. Some representatives underlined the importance of further implementation of the Basel Convention. Another representative welcomed the adoption by African countries of the Bamako Convention on the control of imports of hazardous wastes into Africa.

4. Programme element 10.4: Global Resource Information Database (GRID)

136. A number of representatives expressed support for strengthening of the Global Resource Information Database (GRID).

137. Several representatives expressed support for the creation of a Programme Activity Centre for policy development and management of the GRID network. Some representatives emphasized the need for co-ordination of the Earthwatch element, as proposed in the Secretary-General's draft report, and for continued strong links between the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS) and GRID.

138. One representative emphasized that a GRID-Nairobi facility should continue to operate and that GRID-Geneva should be concerned with maintaining the global GRID data holdings. He expressed support for the expansion of the GRID network and proposed that existing training programmes should be strengthened through UNITAR and donors. Donor assistance should be also sought for expanding the use of GRID technology in developing countries. The representative stressed that GRID should move from demonstration projects to the development of regional and global data sets, in co-operation with other international organizations.

139. One representative raised some queries concerning co-ordination with the Preparatory Committee of UNCED and the possibility of opening GRID-compatible centers other than in Africa and Europe.

140. In reply, the representative from the secretariat stated that GRID was awaiting specific data requirements from UNCED and that some technical assistance had been provided to the UNCED Secretariat by GRID-Geneva. He clarified the role of GRID centers. Concerning other regions, GRID was already supporting the development of capability in sub-regional bodies such as the Asian Institute of Technology which housed GRID-Bangkok. Discussions were well advanced with the South-Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and with the Caribbean Action Plan Secretariat.

141. The representative of the USSR informed the Committee that his Government would take part in the development of GRID, and that plans for the establishment of a GRID center in Moscow had been prepared.

142. The observer for the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) referred to co-operation with GRID in the field of strengthening Geographic Information System (GIS) capabilities in Africa, in partnership with GEMS and UNITAR.

5. Programme element 10.5: Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS)

143. Some representatives stressed the need for general co-operation in this field with relevant international and national institutes.

144. A number of representatives and the observers for WHO, WMO, Unesco and UNSO voiced their strong support for the GEMS programme. One representative said that the programme deserved ongoing support because of the necessity of having sound environmental information on which to base management action.

145. Several representatives and the observers for WHO, WMO and Unesco stressed the need for technical assistance to strengthen national capabilities through training, technical support and other activities. The representative of the secretariat stated that GEMS was aware of this need and that there was provision for technical assistance under programme element 10.5, points 6 and 10. A programme to strengthen monitoring and assessment capabilities was under way in Africa, final discussions had been held with the South Pacific Environment Programme (SPREP) and discussions were under way with the Caribbean region.

146. The observer for WMO described the ongoing co-operation with UNEP in the monitoring and assessment of ozone, climate and climate change. He expressed the need to strengthen co-operation and support for preparation of assessments in the fields of long-range transport of pollutants, including acidity in precipitation, the changing oxidizing capacity of the atmosphere and changes of greenhouse gases, using existing monitoring capacities. He further called for the strengthening of the reporting of data on ozone and greenhouse gases in Antarctica and tropical regions and for the improvement of the Global Atmospheric Watch, to be carried out in conjunction with UNEP through GEMS. He suggested that those activities could form part of an early-warning system.

147. The observer for WHO reported on the involvement of his organization in the environmental pollution programmes, GEMS/Air, GEMS/WATER, GEMS/FOOD and HEALs (Human Exposure Assessment Locations). He drew attention to the newly established programme for radiation monitoring and stressed the need to increase the geographical coverage of the programmes to support better assessments.

148. The observer for Unesco, speaking also on behalf of IOC, reported on the monitoring and assessment activities that were relevant to GEMS. He welcomed the development of a network to study anthropogenic and climate change impact on terrestrial ecosystems and suggested the use of biosphere reserves for the network. One representative also supported this network and stressed the need for co-operation with the ECE programme on integrated monitoring. The representative of the secretariat informed the Committee that the development of the programme had taken into consideration activities under way in the field of integrated monitoring under the ECE.

149. The observer for FAO reported on FAO's Forest Resources Assessment 1990 base being completed, which should be continued, with the support of several donors in terms of monitoring of deforestation and the condition of the world's forests. He also spoke about FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System, which was well-tested and could provide through the satellite imagery reception stations at the FAO headquarters and in Nairobi information on soil and vegetation condition, locust outbreaks and could assist in drought forecasting and food security measures. Earthwatch should be supportive and not duplicate efforts in this field. The representative of the secretariat informed the Committee that any future developments could take into consideration what is already existing and working in the system.

Co-operation with FAO was welcomed. The representative also pointed out that support was foreseen for the forest assessment under programme element 3.3, activity 1. One representative expressed support for the assessment of forest cover and the establishment of an early warning-system.

150. One representative commented on the GEMS/WATER programme and stressed the need to strengthen quality assurance, procedures and support for countries to allow them to interpret data for policy decision-making.

151. Some representatives stressed the importance and value of the project on the improvement and harmonization of environmental measurements. During the course of discussions on Harmonization of Environmental Measures (HEM) three countries, while endorsing the substance, raised the question of the principle governing selection of location for various UNEP activities. In reply, the representative of the Secretariat stated that the location of HEM had been decided by two earlier Governing Council decisions (14/24 and 15/38). The point of principle raised by the delegation was important and could be discussed later.

152. One representative stressed the importance of the environmental problems associated with megacities and supported the WHO/UNEP/GEMS assessment of air quality in megacities. He also raised the question of the comparison of data between cities.

153. The representative of the secretariat informed the Committee that the WHO/UNEP/GEMS assessment of air quality in megacities now under way was using national data supplied to the GEMS/Air programme, together with supplementary national data; that would allow such comparisons to be made where appropriate.

154. Some representatives drew attention to the serious environmental consequences of the Chernobyl accident and called for further international support.

155. Some other representatives drew the attention of the Committee to the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) programme and requested UNEP support for this. The representative of the secretariat welcomed closer association with IGBP activities, including the System for Analysis, Research and Training (START). GEMS, he stated, had already noted the recommendation of the Second World Climate Conference to establish regional climate centres. UNEP recognized that such centres would have useful roles and would wish to ensure that these centres developed a capacity for climate impact assessment in each region and would also be a focus for improved education, training and dissemination of information on climate and climate change issues.

156. One representative voiced concern about the proposed increased budget for GEMS, suggesting that Earthwatch should be consolidated in Geneva to facilitate communication.

6. Programme element 10.6: State of the Environment

157. One representative stressed the importance of the preparation of the state-of-the-environment reports requested by the Governing Council, and drew attention to the need to provide financial and technical assistance to 20 developing countries for preparation of national state-of-the-environment reports. He stated that this figure should be doubled if possible.

158. One other representative expressed the wish to have the comprehensive report on the state of the environment covering the period 1972-1992 ready in time for UNCED, as the report would be an essential input from UNEP.

K. Subprogramme 11: Environmental management measures

1. Programme element 11.1: Environmental aspects of development planning and co-operation

159. Many representatives gave strong support to this programme element, which they considered to be of major importance. Some representatives observed that integration of environmental considerations into economic policies and planning was critical to improving environmental conditions. One representative said that the activities under the programme element were of interest to developing and developed countries alike, and another said that they reflected a preventive approach to dealing with environmental issues.

160. Several representatives proposed that, in view of its significance and its contribution to policy formulation, the programme element should be strengthened by means of a larger budgetary allocation. Some of these representatives suggested that the larger allocation could perhaps be achieved by means of a reduction in the proposed budget for programme element 11.2 on Environmental Law and Institutions.

161. Some representatives highlighted the need to maintain the focus on economic analysis of environmental issues, while several others pointed to the importance of promoting the use of environmental impact assessment in making decisions on development. One representative stated that work relating to natural-resource and environmental accounting was important, and suggested that UNEP should support possible UNCED work in this field.

162. Several representatives agreed that high priority should be given to the proposed activity relating to training, exchange of information and expertise in analytical methods, economic policy instruments and procedures. One representative expressed appreciation for UNEP's collaboration under this programme element in organizing regional training seminars on environmental impact assessment, held in Bandung, Indonesia. Another representative proposed that, in view of the need to apply environmental impact assessment in planning and project appraisal, the programme element should serve as a focal point for information on expertise on environmental impact assessment.

163. One representative suggested that activities should give special attention to helping developing countries build a national institutional and regulatory capability to integrate environmental considerations into the development process.

164. The observer for the EC Commission acknowledged that a proposal had been received from the UNEP secretariat for collaboration in the use of economic policy instruments to achieve environmental goals, and that the Commission was studying the proposal with interest.

165. The observer for FAO informed the Committee that, further to the implementation of Environmental Impact Assessment in FAO's field projects, FAO intended to start work related to sustainability assessment, to take into account social, economic and technological factors along side environmental factors in project appraisal and expressed FAO's interest in strengthening work with UNEP in that field and on environmental accounting.

166. The observer for UNIDO pointed out that the circumstances and needs of planning for environmentally sound development differed from country to country and stressed the importance of working closely with all departments of

the Government and United Nations agencies concerned. She expressed the appreciation for the United Nations system's ongoing effort, co-ordinated by UNEP, to develop a methodology to assist countries in a concerted manner.

167. In response to requests for clarification from two representatives on activity element 4 of the subprogramme relating to international economic co-operation and the environment, the representative of the secretariat described the expected activities in regard to trade and environment, international finance and the environment and transnational investments and the environment. He also explained that UNEP would be working in consultation with concerned international organizations in this field.

2. Programme element 11.2: Environmental law

168. There was general support and appreciation for the work of UNEP's Environmental Law and Institutions Unit in developing global legal instruments in the field of the environment and providing assistance to developing countries. Most representatives called for the Environmental Law and Institutions Unit (ELIU) to be strengthened to enable it to perform its functions effectively.

169. Several representatives expressed their appreciation for the assistance given to develop national legislation and strengthen institutional arrangements, and further urged the Unit to give greater support to the review and elaboration of national environmental legislation, training of lawyers in environmental law, and assistance to incorporate provisions of global conventions into national legislation.

170. One representative, while stressing the need to strengthen the implementation of conventions, expressed her doubt about the proposed establishment of an inter-secretariat committee, suggested in document UNEP/GC.16/4/Add.2.

171. Concerning the planned activities, several representatives considered that it was not necessary at the present stage to start preparatory work on the formulation of international legal instruments on chemicals in international trade, environmental impact assessment, marine pollution from land-based sources and hazardous industrial accidents. One representative requested further information on planned ELIU activities in these areas. The representative of the secretariat explained that all the global conventions mentioned in the 1995 target in UNEP/GC.16/15 were for reference only, since the target had been adopted by the Governing Council in 1988.

172. Most of the representatives who spoke on the issue of environmental impact assessment held the view that a regional approach was more appropriate. Citing as an example the regional convention on environmental impact assessment in the transboundary context, adopted by the ECE countries, one representative urged that this be used as a model for other regions.

173. Some representatives stressed the importance of the Halifax meeting on marine pollution from land-based sources and urged UNEP to consider carefully the outcome of that meeting before deciding on follow-up action. One representative expressed his Government's support for UNEP's work on the subject of such pollution and urged the Council to pay more attention to it.

174. Several representatives expressed their support for the work of UNEP in the formulation of a global convention on biological diversity and urged UNEP to give this activity high priority. One representative supported the development of a convention on the management of hazardous wastes.

175. Some representatives were of the opinion that experience should be gained in the implementation of the amended London Guidelines and that model national legislation should be further developed and reviewed before consideration was given to the elaboration of a convention on international trade in chemicals.

176. With regard to the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, one representative stated that, now that the African Convention on the Ban on the Import of all forms of Hazardous Wastes into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements of Such Wastes Generated in Africa had been adopted, African countries would consider becoming parties to the Basel Convention on an individual basis. This was welcomed by another delegation. Some representatives informed the Council that their Governments were in the process of ratifying the Basel Convention. The observer for IMO informed the Committee of the recommendation of the Contracting Parties to the London Dumping Convention concerning the need for UNCED to consider a global instrument as well as new or improved regional agreements on the prevention, reduction and control of land-based sources of marine pollution. In this respect he pointed out that IMO had participated in the process begun at the Halifax meeting and looked forward to participating in further deliberations.

177. Referring to the earlier discussion on the issue of climate, one representative requested that UNEP allocate additional resources to support the work of the INC on Climate Change, in particular through the reallocation of funds provided for the preparation of legal instruments on international trade in chemical products and impact studies, marine pollution from land-based sources and industrial accidents, which all represented areas on which no agreement had yet been reached. Another representative suggested that UNEP should put the ELIU's rich store of experience in negotiating international agreements in the field of the environment at the disposal of the INC.

178. One representative suggested that, while preparing the computer database of principal government bodies dealing with the environment, as outlined under activity 5(d), non-governmental organizations should be taken into account. Speaking in reply, the representative of the secretariat stated that this had already been considered.

179. One representative expressed the view that the issue of examination of mechanisms to resolve environmental conflicts, including verification of adherence to environmental commitments, should be removed from subprogramme 9, activity 3, and brought under the activities of the Environmental Law and Institutions Unit.

180. Referring to the draft decision before the Council to establish the Environmental Law and Institutions Unit as a Programme Activity Centre, many representatives. Some representatives, however, considered that the proposal needed further clarification, particularly regarding the differences in practice between the functions of Units and of Programme Activity Centres within UNEP.

181. Explaining the proposal to upgrade the Unit into a Programme Activity Centre, the representative of the secretariat stated that the change was required by the increasing co-ordinating and administrative activities of ELIU in relation to the secretariat's other conventions. More flexibility and independence would, she said, enable the unit to function efficiently.

182. One representative requested further clarification regarding the substantial increase in allocation of funds to the Unit for 1992-1993. Another representative expressed the view that the increase was justified, considering the nature of the work the Unit had to do.

183. In reply, the representative of the secretariat explained that the increased allocations were mainly due to the expansion of technical assistance to developing countries as well as to increasing costs of organizing meetings.

184. Referring to the planned work on international legal instruments, the representative of the secretariat explained that it would concentrate where appropriate, on formulating and implementing legally binding instruments as well as implementing existing guidelines. The representative of the secretariat further explained that the allocation for climate change under the budget line was intended only to cover technical assistance for the negotiation process.

L. Subprogramme 12: Environmental awareness

1. Programme Element 12.1: Environmental education and training

185. There was general support for UNEP's action in the field of education and training, and for further close collaboration between UNEP and Unesco in the conduct of the International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP). One representative expressed his gratitude to UNEP for its assistance in this field.

186. The observer from Unesco spoke of the long and fruitful collaboration between UNEP and Unesco in environmental education, particularly for the preparation of UNCED. Unesco, he said, was committed to further strengthening the IEEP.

187. One representative called on UNEP to further strengthen school programmes dealing with environmental issues. Another representative stressed the need for the IEEP to conduct more environmental courses, workshops and seminars for educational planners and administrators, educators and decision-makers. The observer for the League of Arab States, acknowledging the important contribution made by the IEEP, called on UNEP and Unesco to establish links, within IEEP, between educationists and environmentalists.

188. Some representatives requested further information on activities relating to the proposed research fellowship programme and on the consultancy and advisory service to universities. The representative of the secretariat stated that practically all universities were either strengthening or setting up departments or faculties of environment. In 1990, over 50 specific requests for assistance had been received and answered by UNEP and, as the trend was increasing, the new activity had been proposed. With regard to the research fellowships, he said that with an annual budget of $1 million, between 50 and 75 grants could be awarded to enable promising young scientists and environmentalists to pursue research for a period of 4 months to one year, and co-operation with the Regional Offices was envisaged. A set of 12 criteria had been defined, including geographical distribution and applicability of expected research results in helping to improve environmental management.

189. Some representatives stressed the need to include elements of environmental literacy in education programmes, and pointed to the International Strategy for Action in the field of Environmental Education and Training for the 1990s, produced jointly by Unesco and UNEP, as an excellent framework for attaining environmental literacy.

190. One representative stressed the need to link environmental training with technology transfer. The representative of the secretariat said that UNEP was offering training in selected universities in developed countries through which technology transfer occurred. Examples included courses in Environmental Management at Dresden in Germany and at Tufts University in the United States.

191. One representative called for UNEP to intensify the environmental training programmes at regional and national levels and to support the establishment of Green Belts in the Arab World. Some representatives stressed the importance of targetting environmental training programmes to women.

192. The observer for the League of Arab States, while welcoming the proposed expansion of the regional training networks, asked whether such expansion would include the Arab region, and whether UNEP educational and training materials were available in Arabic. A representative of the secretariat explained that Arab States were included in the network for Africa or West Asia, and that most IEEP training modules were available in Arabic.

193. The observer for ILO expressed his appreciation for the joint UNEP-ILO training programme involving employers and workers organizations and called for further collaborative efforts between the two organizations. On the subject of co-ordination, the representative of the secretariat informed the delegates that a meeting of Designated Officials on Environmental Matters could be organized in September 1991 to review the environmental training programmes carried out by the United Nations system.

194. Concerning the proposal to establish a World Environment Academy, a number of representatives expressed their concern about the risk of duplication between the proposed Academy and other existing institutions or activities. They requested clarification and additional information. One representative supported the establishment of the Academy.

195. The observer for the League of Arab States said that the Academy was within the purview of Unesco rather than UNEP, because of its educational and scientific nature. Several representatives considered that the resources earmarked for the activity could be put to better use. The observer from Unesco favoured the creation of a small institution to carry out clearly defined research and training activities in the field of environment and development, focusing on an inter-disciplinary approach.

196. One representative wondered whether adequate consultations had been convened between UNEP and relevant organizations such as OECD, SPREP and ESCAP, among others, to finalize details for the establishment of the Academy. Another representative called for UNEP to make a thorough study of the need for such an Academy and to present the report to the Governing Council at its next session. One representative expressed the wish that the final decision to establish the Academy should be deferred until UNCED in 1992.

197. The representative of the secretariat, referring to document UNEP/GC.16/4/Add.3, said that, although the Academy would be subject to discussion and approval of the Plenary Meeting, some clarifications might help

in facilitating such a discussion. He explained that, having carried out studies on the matter, and consultations with relevant international organizations, he did not see any risk of duplication between the Academy and existing activities or institutions. It was envisaged that the Academy would not deal solely with the environment, but also with environment-development issues. Membership would include not only environmental scientists but also industry, energy and other development sectors.

2. Programme element 12.2: Public information

198. Many representatives and the observer for the EC Commission stressed the importance of environmental awareness in environment and development, as it provided decision makers and the public with the necessary information to make changes to their policies and lifestyles.

199. One representative proposed that UNEP should use electronic-mail systems to get information out more quickly to non-governmental organizations and the media, which would facilitate, inter alia, a quicker dispatch of Governing Council documents to Governments.

200. Several representatives considered that information strategies should take into consideration the high rate of illiteracy in developing countries. One representative pointed out that information must be transferred to all levels and sectors of society, as literacy levels varied from country to country, and from one level of society to another. He added that one way to communicate effectively would be to work through non-governmental organizations.

201. A number of representatives called for a strengthening of public awareness activities in developing countries in order to solve their environmental problems, particularly through national and regional information campaigns.

202. Representatives from the Arabic-speaking region requested UNEP to disseminate more of its publications in Arabic. Some representatives also underlined the crucial role of women in spreading environmental awareness.

203. Several representatives said the idea of Green Brigade needed further development and requested more information. In implementing the scheme, care should be taken not to expose young volunteers to hazardous situations, one representative noted. The observer for EC Commission suggested that the Green Brigade should be co-ordinated with existing NGOs and volunteer groups and should start on a small scale. She offered the relevant expertise of the Commission in support of this initiative.

204. The representative of Thailand indicated that his Government had launched a similar activity at the national level and would also be willing to share this experience with UNEP. One representative thought the Green Brigade was an interesting idea and that such a mechanism could be used to respond to environmental emergencies and mobilize public opinion. However, he felt that the financial and legal aspects of this issue required scrutiny. Some representatives questioned the need for a Green Brigade.

205. The representative of the secretariat, referring to document UNEP/GC.16/4/Add.2, advised that only the first phase of the proposed Green Brigade was envisaged during the 1992/1993 biennium. This would involve a small extension of the co-ordinating and networking functions already carried out in this programme, at a cost of no more than $400,000 for the biennium, to

establish a Green Brigade based on existing NGOs and voluntary organizations. Any decision to proceed to the second phase would have to be taken by the Governing Council at its seventeenth session.

206. A number of representatives expressed support for most of UNEP's environmental awareness activities and satisfaction with the work carried out thus far, noting that emphasis on this vital element of UNEP's work must continue and grow in order to help UNEP carry out its catalytic work.

M. Subprogramme 13: Technical and regional co-operation

Programme element 13.1: Technical and Regional Co-operation

207. Some representatives expressed appreciation for UNEP's efforts in providing technical assistance to developing countries through specific regional activities. The observer for SADCC referred to the fruitful technical co-operation in the formulation of the Zambezi River System Action Plan (ZACPLAN) as well as the Plan of Action for Integrated Land Use Planning in the Kalahari-Namib Affected Areas. He expressed hope that increased financial support would be provided for the two programmes.

208. One representative noted the large increase in funding required for the biennium 1992-1993 and requested a clarification regarding the breakdown according to the various Regional Commissions.

209. One representative expressed deep appreciation for UNEP's continued support for the AMCEN programme, which was regarded as essential for addressing key environmental problems in developing countries in Africa.

210. A number of representatives expressed their full support for UNEP's work in relation to the development of the Action Plan for the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean. One representative stressed the importance of increasing UNEP's financial support for the Plan.

211. Several Governments expressed full support for the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and some representatives said they had been encouraged to develop new activities under SPREP. One representative requested further support for the work of the South Pacific Commission.

212. The observer for the League of Arab States expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by UNEP for the Plan of Action of the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development. Assistance for preparing projects within the main work programmes for the region was crucial, he said, in particular for combating desertification and industrial pollution and for increasing public environmental awareness. He considered that such work should also be seen in the light of the preparatory process for UNCED.

213. Clarification was sought by one representative as to the necessity of continuing funding the Regional Commissions, in view of the original intention that the Regional Commissions would gradually integrate environmental activities into their programmes and thereby cover the funding themselves. The representative of the secretariat replied that UNEP's support for the Regional Economic Commissions followed the same principles as for all other bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and was therefore used for joint project activities.

214. Several representatives urged UNEP to increase support to strengthen national institutional and professional capacities of developing countries to allow them to address key environmental problems. The representatives also encouraged UNEP to provide financial and technical assistance, including provision of equipment, to meet environmental needs and to promote the development of national environmental action plans. One representative asked UNEP to be careful not to duplicate efforts already being undertaken by other agencies.

215. Several representatives supported the proposed establishment of the Global Environmental Technology Centre. Others, however, said they were unsure of the funding implications of the establishment of the Centre and the need to ensure proper co-ordination and thus preferred to reserve their position.

216. On the issue of inter-agency co-ordination, several representatives stressed the importance of strengthening inter-agency co-ordination in the United Nations as well as continuing co-operation with other existing organizations within the field of the environment, in order to mutually enhance efforts rather than duplicate them. Several other representatives requested further details on the establishment of a special unit within the UNEP secretariat and one representative was hesitant to support its establishment.

217. The observer for ILO, speaking on behalf of a number of the United Nations agencies represented at the meeting, expressed full support for the proposal to strengthen co-ordination within the United Nations system through, inter alia strengthening secretariat support for co-ordination.

218. Several representatives expressed full support for UNEP's participation in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and stressed that GEF activities should be mutually reinforcing and in harmony with UNEP's objectives within the concentration areas of GEF. They stressed that, although the Scientific Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of GEF would provide guidance to the three implementing agencies, it was essential that UNEP should fully participate in the GEF project selection process, to ensure that selected projects would be incorporating considerations expressed in UNEP Governing Council decisions as well as existing or planned international conventions. The representatives requested on the relationship between foreseen GEF activities and the programme of UNEP.

219. In reply, the representative of the secretariat stated that UNEP would secure its essential role in the project selection process. Furthermore, the guidance which UNEP was providing to STAP in its role as the guiding mechanism for GEF activities would allow a certain influence on setting priorities.

N. Supplementary programme of Environment Fund activities for the biennium 1992-1993

220. The Assistant Executive Director, Office of the Environment Programme, introduced document UNEP/GC.16/15/Add.1, particularly part VI, in which the Council approved in decision 15/1 an appropriation of $35 million as a supplementary appropriation for fund programme activities, as presented in the Annex to the decision. He drew attention to the financial status of implementation of the supplementary programme, as contained in Annex I of UNEP/GC.16/15/Add.1 and the proposed adjustments as contained in Annex II of the document. In view of the recommendation by the Fund Committee to approve a maximum ceiling of $180 million for core and supplementary activities, he informed the Committee that the proposed set of additional activities, over and above this ceiling, would not be discussed.

221. The proposed adjustments, which amount to $6 million, were meant, he explained, to reallocate resources to three highest-priority activities, namely climate change studies in relation to preparation of a convention on biological diversity and support for the preparatory process of UNCED.

222. With regard to the proposed adjustment of $500,000 in activity 1 of Annex II to study the implications of climatic changes and rising sea-level in coastal areas, one representative asked whether this activity would be co-ordinated with the work of IPCC. The representative of the secretariat assured him that it would be so.

223. Some representatives expressed their concern at the reduction of the appropriation for UNEP's contribution to the development and implementation of the Latin American and the Caribbean Regional Environmental Programme (Activity 13). The representative of the secretariat explained that, due to the late approval of the Action Plan, the implementation of that activity had been delayed and therefore did not need that level of resources for 1991.

224. One representative referred to the ongoing meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and to UNEP goal for 1995. He requested clarification why, if the African Programme was a priority, the secretariat had suggested a reduction to the appropriation (Activity 12).

O. Modifications to the UNEP Medium-Term Plan by the General Assembly

225. The Assistant Executive Director, introducing document UNEP/GC.16/21/Add.2 and Corrs. 1 and 2, explained that the General Assembly, at its forty-fifth session, had introduced several amendments to Programme 16 on environment of the United Nations Medium-Term Plan 1992-1997. He added that the UNEP Medium-Term Plan was based on the system-wide medium-term environment programme (SWMTEP) 1990-1995, approved by the special session of the Governing Council in 1988.

226. Some representatives wondered whether the Governing Council had the authority to reverse a decision taken by the General Assembly. One delegation said that the Governing Council could make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the Assembly's resolutions.

227. Some representatives stated that they did not wish UNEP to continue implementing activities under subprogramme 9, "Peace, security and the environment" and added that the General Assembly had decided to delete this subprogramme. Two representatives considered that this subprogramme had produced very good results and mentioned several publications of very high quality.

228. The Committee decided to delete subprogramme 9 "Peace, security and environment" and to move some of its activities to other subprogrammes. The Committee, however, accepted the other recommendations of the Executive Director to the General Assembly, including the maintenance of environmentally sound management of water resources as a high priority.

P. Strengthening three main units within the Office of the Environment Programme by establishment of Programme Activity Centres (PACs)

229. Most of the representatives that spoke agreed that the draft resolution should be passed in its current form to the Plenary session of the Council. During the debate, some representatives supported the creation of all three PACs, while others voiced greater support for the conversion of IEO and GRID only. The representative of the secretariat stressed that the creation of PACs was aimed primarily at increasing efficiency, as well as the maintenance and strengthening of close interlinkages.

Q. Action by the Committee

230. Upon completion of its consideration of agenda items 6 (a), 6 (b) and 7, the Committee adopted the report on its deliberations contained in document UNEP/GC.16/PC/L.14 and Adds 1-4 and approved a number of decisions for adoption by the Council in plenary session (UNEP/GC.16/PC/L.18).

231. During the discussion on the adoption of decisions, the Assistant Executive Director, Office of the Environment Programme, referring to the three intergovernmental meetings of experts proposed in the draft decisions on toxic chemicals, oceans and coastal areas, and hazardous wastes, informed the Committee that these meetings could only be undertaken if additional resources were made available to the Secretariat. Furthermore, he expressed strong reservations about the feasibility of convening these meetings and reporting on them in time for the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

R. Other Matters

232. At the twelfth meeting of the Committee on 25 May 1991, the representative of Mexico expressed his dissatisfaction at the fact that no interpretation into the languages of the United Nations was available after 6.15 p.m. and that this recurring state of affairs disadvantaged his and other representatives. Stating that, in a spirit of co-operation, he was prepared to continue to participate in an extended meeting held in English only, he wished his views to be put on the record of the Committee. His opinions were supported by the representatives of Argentina, France, Greece and Saudi Arabia.